

SECOND LETTER,

TO THE REVEREND

JOSEPH BELLAMY, D.D.

Occasioned by his fourth Dialogue, which he calls, *The sacramental Controversy brought to a Point.*

From the PARISHIONER.

Dost thou well to be angry for the Gourd?

Jonah iv. 9.

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A Second Letter to Dr. BELLAMY, upon the Sacramental Controversy.

Reverend Sir,

YOUR fourth dialogue is just come to hand, intituled, *The sacramental controversy brought to a point.* A title not unworthy its author. But I am not certain that I have discovered the golden *point*. I look'd for it thro' the dialogue, but not satisfied that I had found it, I look'd for it in a note in 14 p. where you put in the reasoning of the piece, which I shall advert to by and by. But whatever my success has been in this regard, I avail'd myself of the perusal, by discovering several fly things couch'd in the piece. I have not time to mention them all, but there is one, which in regard to my character, and the truth, I must recite, and just take notice of. It is in 11 p. where you tell me, I am drove to a necessity of changing my name; and wittily add upon it too, as follows, (viz.) "We have heard of men's changing their names, when pursued for their crimes, that they might avoid their pursuers, but did you before now ever hear of a parishioner, that went to his minister to get his child baptized that did so." The period Dr. is a little too lengthy or the wit I own would have been complete. But being so long, the mind is kept rather too long in suspense before it gets to the butt end. Notwithstanding Dr. the wit is not to be despised, but you blundered a little in bringing of it out; for, the *fact* of changing my name, happen'd not to be *true*: No, sir, I have not changed my name, but have ever wrote myself *your parishioner*, without the variation of one syllable or one letter of my name.

Here, my minister, I will help you a little. It is really

ally thought by some, that you have two parishioners, bearing one name. But then you know Dr, this is not the same crime, as one parishioner's bearing two names. You ought, fir, to have considered this and not been quite so witty. And really, fir, it seems to me, that you knew that your controverting parishioners were two distinct beings; and if you did know it, I blame you a little, my minister, that when you make the other parishioner dissemble to humour the cause, you charge it upon me. Nay, fir, between you & I, I take it a little unkind, that when he talks silly, you crow over us both. I should be quite offended with you, Dr. for charging all his nonsense upon me; yea, and for making him talk so silly, were it not that necessity drove you to it, in order to bring the controversy to a point. But to prevent such blunders for the future, the two parishioners must be describ'd and distinguished. Please to attend, Dr. The one parishioner who wrote the *New-London dialogue*, and afterwards a letter to you, printed at *New-Haven*, seems to be a man of common sense, and much like other men. But the other who always appears in the *New-Haven dialogue*, seems to be hardly of the human species, and is rather a *man of straw*. Your treatment of them also has mark'd the difference.

The first you entered the field against with open mouth, and club in hand, but all harmless, as your satyrs, never gave one bite; nor struck a blow, but wheel'd about; only, in making off the ground, you mutter'd out the following scraps, viz.  You lie---  The ministers and churches through the land are virtually guilty of dissimulation, as bad as drunkenness—  Deist, Pelagian, Arminian, Semi-arminian, Taylor, Whitby, Stebbins, graceless covenant; then skulk'd behind the *Westminster divines*, and Mr. *Stoddard*; whence, I must bring you out again, by and by.

Your other parishioner, Dr. you have treated, as tho' you knew him to be another being, yea, as tho' you knew

knew him to be a *man of straw*: You scuffle with him, box him for not knowing what spirit he is of; knock him down for despising your ministerial rebukes, kick him up again, for not asking your prayers; then you squeeze him, and make him say he had been acting the part of a disputant; then you pinch him, and make him own beat; then you make him beg your friendship, and love you like any thing. In return, you tell him, p. 24. You shall always retain a most grateful sense of his kind treatment of his minister, and esteem it among the great blessings of your life, that your other parishioners are so like him. Most certainly, Dr. you have two parishioners to deal with, and I really thought you knew it before. But it seems as tho' in your warmth, you had forgot it, and this made you blunder, Dr. and treat the affair, as tho' your two parishioners had been but one individual person, with two names. I think, Dr. you have not told what your one parishioner has changed his name to. Which makes some uncharitable people a little question your veracity. For my part, I place the *blunder*, to the account of inadvertance, and warmth, all, except the *wit* of it. Be so good, Dr. in time to come, as not to charge upon me, the weakness, and wickedness, which you put into the mouth of *Jack Straw*.

In the next place, I must just observe to you, Dr. that you have made several mistakes, in quoting from my letter. P. 4. you have pretended to quote the heresy, that you are chargeable with, and have left out several material things, viz. "*All endeavours can only serve to aggravate guilt.*" And again, them words, "*Or exercise any will or choice that has the least tendency to it.*" Words which in their connection are full of heresy. Why (sir) did you suppress these sentences? Would you adopt principles, Dr. which you are ashamed to speak out? But what is rather worse, Dr. you have pretended, p. 7, to quote something from said letter, which never was in it, viz. the following sentence: "*A measure of strength is given*"

"given him," (i. e. the unconverted man) "by God, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." This by some is thought to deserve a worse name, than I am willing to apply to my minister. When your anger is subsided, you will see your abuse, Dr. and be sensible there is no such thing, in all the letter you pretend to quote it from. You have made so many slips of this kind, that I ha'n't time to mention them all; but must leave them for you to correct, in some cooler hour. Be kind enough good Dr. when you quote from me again, and mark it for a quotation, to write what I have said, & not what you would have me say.

I observe in your 11th and 12th pages, you have got your man of straw, to shift the dispute, in order to loose sight of the point in controversy, between you and me; you set him to dispute this point with you, whether a man who knows he has no grace, can without willful lying say he has grace. Here you bestir yourself notably, and with a *jerk* bring the controversy to a *point*. Really Dr. you have here got the better of your *man of straw*; in a point that no body but he, was ever silly enough, to dispute with you.

The point with you and I, Dr. is not whether a man has grace, who we allow has none. No Sir, the points between us are, whether a man who knows he has no grace, can be an honest man, and own the covenant, which you and I owned, which in its reasonable, natural, and necessary construction, I have shewn he may: and which you deny. Also whether he may say the Lord's Prayer; which you deny. Also whether he is guilty of sinning as bad as drunkenness, in coming to the Lord's Table: which you affirm. You have also affirm'd that shou'd he own the covenant, he would be no more in covenant than the Devil. 'Tis for holding these principles, Dr. that I have charged you, with holding principles too near of kin to the most shocking principles of Mr. Sandeman and Mr. Hopkins. Add to these the very principles of Mr. Sandeman

Sandeman and Hopkins, which you have now adopted, by calling of them p. 6. "Some of the *important doctrines of Christianity*." As these doctrines, which you call important doctrines of Christianity and I call dangerous, yea the most dangerous of any that were ever broach'd in the Christian world : Deism itself not excepted. As these doctrines are now become matter of controversy between us, I shall in stating the points between us, repeat them with exactness, as in my former letter.

Mr. *Sandeman* says, that "faith is obtained as the most remarkable discoveries have been obtain'd, the use of the magnet, Jesuits Bark, and many chymical discoveries, i. e. not when these things, but something else was look'd for—and all endeavours can only serve to aggravate guilt, &c.

Letters on Theron.

Mr. *Hopkins* says the same in affect, viz. "It is indeed as great an absurdity as can be tho't of, to suppose that the corrupt vicious heart, does any thing towards becoming holy ; or exercises any will, or choice, that has the least tendency to it, as absurd as to suppose, that the exercise of perfect selfishness, has a tendency to produce benevolence, or that the heart is made better, and becomes holy, by the constant exercise of lust and wickedness : for all the exercises of the corrupt unregenerate heart, are certainly the exercises of sin." Serm. on John. 1. 13. These, Dr. you call important doctrines of Christianity, and these are the points between us, and not whether a man lies to say he has grace, when he knows he has none. No Sir, this last knotty point I shall leave you to settle, with your man of straw, and only attend to the former.

What have you said for yourself, in regard to these dangerous errors ?

Why you charge me with heresy. This is natural enough, Dr. when one is pinch'd, to retort : and had it been true, it would not have help'd you. But the trick is too stale, it can serve you no longer. Mr. *Sandeman* has tried it,

it, and played the same game, and in defence of the same principles against Mr. Guthrie, and others. Hear what he says : “ *If any one chuses to go to Hell by a devouter path, rather than by any other, let him study to form his heart, on any one of these four famous treatises, Guthries tryal of a saving interest—Marshall on Sanctification; Boston’s fourfold state : and Doddridges rise and progress. He that desires to be converted this way, becomes twofold more a child of Hell.* Sandeman’s letters on Theron. Your principles, at length, are out, Dr. ’tis too late to think of hiding. You have struck up the same note with with Sandeman, for the same reasons, and in support of the same principles : yea in support of Sandeman’s and Hopkins’s express principles. And you call them, the important doctrines of Christianity. This is a summary of said important doctrines : viz. That all which an unconverted man can will, or do, has no more tendency to make him better, than the constant exercise of lust and wickedness has, and can only serve to aggravate guilt. A doctrine, than which there is not in all the magazines of darkness, one engine, more calculated to promote the kingdom of Satan, and destroy that of Messiah. ’Tis for contradicting these important doctrins, as you call them, that Sandeman treated those eminent men, almost as Devils. ’Tis for the same thing, Dr. that you call me a beretick, neither am I offended at it. But had you play’d the same game through, you must have cry’d out beresy against the Westminster divines, and the greatest of bereticks against Mr. Stoddard. For unluckily, Dr. these worthy divines, to whom you appeal, with one voice, condemn your important doctrines. Now, Dr. I shall attend to your curious method of improving the Westminster divines and Mr. Stoddard, in aid of Mr. Sandeman’s principles and your own. You say these venerable divines, held total depravity, and divine sovereignty, and so do you. And what, of that sir ? why had not you said, these divines, held the doctrine of the resurrection, and so do you ? It would just as well have saved you, from the imputation of heresy.

As

As to total depravity : that is a point, Dr. you need not have call'd them to prove ; your dialogues alone, would have sufficiently proved it. Especially, when no body denied it. For admitting the definition of the Westminster divines, I know of no man, that denies the doctrine of total depravity. Thus those divines define it, " Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God." The want of conformity to God's law, being that which gives sin its denomination, no human being, nor human action, can be free from it ; for there is a wantage of perfection in the best of them. Agreeable to this definition, these divines say farther, there is no mere man, but what daily breaks the law of God, " in thought, word, and deed."

Now, Dr. how would you twist their notion of depravity, so as to let a converted man say the Lord's-prayer, and come to his table, while by it you would keep an unconverted man from both ?

Your method of reasoning from total depravity, to bring the sacramental controversy to a point, if one can guess right, is this, Dr. viz. Human nature being totally depraved, the unregenerate must sin, if they say the Lord's Prayer, or come to his table : and therefore they ought to do neither.

Now if the Westminster divines say right, the converted also sin in all they do, and your reasoning from total depravity, will as truly cut off the converted, as the unconverted, from the Lord's-prayer and table : and make their endeavours, only aggravate their guilt. I suppose, Dr. you did not see how blunt the point is, to which you have brought the sacramental controversy.

There is another consequence of your reasoning from total depravity, which you can neither get rid of, nor support. Thus should an unconverted man come to you and tell you, that he thought it his duty to honour his father and mother, your reasoning tells him, no : by no means. Human nature being totally depraved, he cannot

not do it without sinning, and therefore he must not do it at all.

Your reasoning, Dr. from total depravity to bring the sacramental controversy to a point, gives but too sad a specimen of the total depravity of your understanding.

'Tis true those venerable divines you have named, held the doctrine, of total depravity, together with that of divine sovereignty, and so do all calvinistick divines. But then, they held it in a sense as different, from what Sandeman and you hold it, as the *Copernick* system, is from the *Ptolemaick*. They never held that human nature was depraved, in such a sense, that all the endeavours of the unconverted, can only serve to aggravate guilt, as Sandeman and you hold.

They never held, that the unconverted could exercise no will, or choice, that has any tendency to becoming holy, as Hopkins and you hold.

They never supposed, that it was dissimulation and lying, for the unconverted, explicitly to enter into covenant, and engage to be the Lord's, or that it was as bad as drunkenness, for them with moral sincerity to come to the Lord's table; as you suppose; they never said, the unconverted had better do nothing, than say the Lord's prayer; as you say.

These are the points, Dr. wherein you want the assistance of these venerable divines, for these are the points, in which you stand charg'd with dangerous errors. In this extremity, to which of them will you turn?

As to Mr. *Stoddard*: he has in the strongest and most express terms declared, 'tis the duty of the unconverted, who have a competency of doctrinal knowledge, and of regular life, not only to own the covenant, but to come to the Lord's table also, as to a converting ordinance: he says expressly, that "sanctification, is not a necessary qualification to partaking in the Lord's-supper." See his serm. on Exod. 12. 47, 48. Where he says, "The giving of converting grace is not limited to any one ordinance."

"dinance. Prayer is very serviceable that way. Prov.
 " 2. 2. So the hearing of the word is very serviceable.
 " The entrance of God's word giveth light. So the sa-
 " craments are very useful for conversion : God teach-
 " es us in baptism, that we are naturally polluted, and,
 " that we need to be cleansed by the blood of Christ.
 " God, in the Lord's-supper, invites us to come to
 " Christ, makes an affecting representation of his suf-
 " ferings for our sins, testifies the sufficiency of Christ,
 " confirms the truth of the covenant of grace, teacheth
 " us that the promise of salvation to those that believe
 " in Christ, is certain ; all sacraments are seals of the co-
 " venant, as circumcision was." Thus Mr. Stoddard.
 Is this the divine, Dr. under whose wing you would fain
 shroud yourself ? When you knew he urged the uncon-
 verted to own the covenant, and come to the Lord's-
 table, and never once suggested that they would be no
 more in covenant than the devil, never told them that
 at the Lord's-table, they would be guilty of lying, as
 bad as drunkenness, and that they would but eat and
 drink damnation to themselves. He taught the youth
 publicly to say the Lord's-prayer, without giving the
 least hint, that they were all the while telling lies. He
 has told us, that the unconverted might do much towards
 conversion, by a proper attendance upon the means of
 grace, prayer, the word preach'd, and the sacraments :
 And never told us that the unconverted could will
 nothing, do nothing, that has the least tendency towards
 their being holy ; never said that the unconverted are as
 likely to obtain faith, without looking for it, as with. No,
 Dr. he never told the unconverted, that the constant ex-
 ercise of lust and wickedness tended to make his heart
 better, as much as any thing that he would will or do.
 No, sir, Mr. Stoddard you must know, says directly the
 reverse. Think not that a few detach'd sentences, pickt
 out of Mr. Stoddard, will screne you, when he has wrote
 large tracts, and in a very nervous and masterly way ;
 the

the spirit of which, is directly against the foregoing heresies.

Contradicted and forsaken of Mr. Stoddard, will you turn to the *Westminster divines*? These also condemn you, and your two friends, hear what they say, "The outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances; especially the word, sacraments, and prayer, all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation." All the odds, Dr. between them & you is; You say the means are effectual to damnation, they say to salvation. They say, "the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, is by the spirit of God, made an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners." And what says your important doctrine, which you say it is deism to contradict? Why it says, that the reading of the word, or the hearing of it preached, or any thing else that the sinner can do, has not the least tendency towards becoming holy; no, no more tendency to it, than the constant exercise of lust, and wickedness. Dr. fling off your thin disguise, come forward, and take rank with those, with whom I have placed you, and never again mention yourself among calvinistick divines, until you have renounced your errors. Your telling of me that you hold total depravity, is by no means satisfactory, for the inferences you draw from it, can only increase it.

In p. 5. you tell me I knew that the church under your care, profess'd to be in the same *scheme* of religion with you. You are mistaken, sir, I did not know your scheme, until lately.

In p. 9. you refer me to a book of yours, against Mr. Sandeman, printed at Boston. I have not seen it. But if it was not design'd as a blind, I am very sorry that you have since chang'd sides, and adopted the vilest principles that Sandeman, or any body else ever broach'd in the christian world. This cannot be satisfactory, Dr.

For, however well and worthy its author, it may be, yet

it was wrote before the dialogues, which contain your Sandemanian errors.

In p. 15. *you say*, and get your *man of straw* to be quite *shock'd at it*, that upon my principles, " One who is at heart a Deist, and who lives secretly in adultery, may, to answer political ends, ask for special ordinances, and there may be no certain evidence of his crimes; therefore according to this new divinity, this infidel, this adulterer, is as certainly qualified to partake of the Lord's-supper as he is to breathe."

I answer : He is no more qualified to partake upon my new divinty, as you call it, than upon your old divinity, provided only that he will add a lie to it, and say he is converted; which you know, Dr. such a man might do.

The man that you have describ'd, Dr. is the secret sinner, but of visibly good life. And by the will of Christ, such an one asking of it, is to be admitted to his table, and that without the hard condition, of telling this lie first; viz. Saying he is converted. But you say nay, he shall first say he is converted, and then he may come and give you joy. For you say the profession of conversion, is the term of admission, which you insist upon. So then the only difference between us, Dr. in regard to the man you have described, is this viz. I say he may come without adding that lie, I am converted, you say he may come with. In short, Dr. our principles when reduced to practice in this instance, differ only thus : you will take the secret deist and adulterer into your church, if he will lie roundly : I would have him admitted without the hard condition. You and I, Dr. are agreed to receive the same man, only I don't agree with you that he should tell a lie first. I need not enlarge for I have sufficiently shewn in my former letter, that the command *do this in remembrance of me*, is universal, with the exception only of apparent ignorance, heresy, or scandal. Vid. p. 16.

you

you have said nothing to invalidate, what I have there wrote, except the quibble now taken notice of.

But I must pass, Dr. to take some notice of the reasoning of your piece, which you have reserv'd to put in a note in 14 p. here you have left your *man of straw*, and set up for *reasoning a point* : and thus you say, " If baptism alone gives right to the Lord's-table, then all baptiz'd persons in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right, which none will grant."

I suppose, Dr. that you was not aware that this reasoning, is precisely as much against your own principles as mine.

You suppose, that the profession of regeneration gives right to the Lord's-table, in the same sense that I suppose, baptism does.

Let us see how sweetly the reasoning rolls along, when we put the profession of regeneration, in the place of baptism. 'Tis thus,

If the profession of regeneration alone gives right to the Lord's-table, then all persons, who profess regeneration in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right, which none will grant. The ungranted conclusion, Dr. follows from your principles, just as from mine ; and not at all from either of them.

If baptism alone gives right to the Lord's-table, it does not follow that the baptized person can't forfeit that right ; the case is the same, if the profession of regeneration alone gives right, it would not follow that, one could not forfeit his right. Baptism, Dr. may give right, without giving an unalienable right.

Your reasoning, Dr. is, as tho' you had said : if being born into the world, alone gives right to life, then all the people born in Christendom, those that are hang'd not excepted, have right to life, which none will grant. The simile is exact.

But

But you go on Dr. to reason shrewdly and say : " If the church have no right to discipline any but those who have a right to come to the Lord's-table, then they have no right to discipline any who are guilty of heresy or scandal, for such have no right to come." Here I suppose you mean, if you mean any thing, that they have no right to come, even before they are disciplined. And how have you proved, Dr. that an offending brother, has no right to come to communion, at any time before the church has judg'd his case ? you have only given your word for it. How do you know any brother is scandalous, before a proper tryal of his case ? Who told you that an offender has no right to the Lord's-table, but is to be consider'd, as a heathen man and publican, before his trial, and before he refuses to hear the church ? Christ has said the reverse, in express terms, † *If he neglect to hear the church, (afterwards, not before) let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.* But you say he is to be consider'd as a heathen before, i. e. as one that has no right to the Lord's-table, before the church judge him guilty of scandal. The law of God judgeth no man before it hear him; but by your scheme you judge and condemn him, and declare he has no right to the Lord's-table ; before ever he is heard.

You ought to know, Dr. that a heretick has right, to all the privileges, he was ever intituled to, until he is judicially convicted of heresy. Don't you know, Dr. that a murderer has right to his life, until he is tried, convicted and sentenc'd to be executed by proper authority ? Don't you know, Dr. that if you should carry your principles into execution, against a murderer, before his conviction, that you would be hang'd for it ? Don't you know, Dr. that a heretick has as good a right to church privileges before his conviction, as a murderer before conviction has to his life ? Be you insensible, that your disciplining an offending brother, involves in it the supposition,

† Mat. 18: 17.

position, that previous to your discipline, he had a right to those privileges, which the final censure of the church is but the abscision from.

Certainly, Dr. you are not so stupid. No, sir. If you are in good humour, you will see your blunders, and be in pain.

My minister, I am in pain for you ; for the next eight lines in your note, are just of a piece with the foregoing, in pity to you, sir, I won't transcribe them.

The rest of your dialogue is, so trifling, that I shall take no further notice of it, but leave you to settle it with your man of straw. And truly, Dr. the whole dialogue, leaving out your name and titles, might pass for a tolerable satyr upon the cause you espouse.

In your next, my minister; when you have brought matters to a *point* again, be so good as to make an after-ism in the margin against the spot. It may save me an hours looking; and make me more laconick in my answer.

I have in this, aimed at several *points* by guess, through fear that I should miss the right : and after all, 'tis matter of doubt with me, whether I have once discovered the misterious *point*, you speak of in that title page, the sacramental controversy brought to a *point*.

Pray, Dr. write with a little more precision, and with a little better temper, and if you can with a little more sense : for really, sir, I am almost asham'd to own you for my minister, and I observe that your pupils also are a little asham'd of you, when they go abroad. However considering my relation to you, I shall think myself oblig'd, to take notice of you when you write me some more dialogues.

And now, Dr. did not your relation to me, as my minister forbid it, I should give you a word of exhortation, forgive me once, a regard to the prosperity of Zion constrains me, to call upon you, to review your writings, and retract the errors contain'd in them : but especially

pecially those most fatal and soul-ruining errors viz. *The unconverted have nothing to do which will in the least forward their eternal salvation ; nothing which has any more tendency to it, than the exercise of lust and wickedness ; that all their endeavours can only aggravate their guilt : and that they are as likely to obtain faith without seeking after it as with.*

My minister, make a penitential confession & renunciation of those shocking principles and no more call them the important doctrines of the gospel. They are calculated to sap the foundations, both of morality and christianity ; they will naturally excite in some horror and distraction, in others stupidity, and in both, immorality.

If God in righteous judgment upon a sinful land should suffer these principles to prevail ; farewell the beauties of holiness ; farewell thou city of our solemnities ; and thou O Zion, once the joy of our land, farewell. Hell will enlarge itself, and the prince of darkness, grow proud and triumph. But God in mercy avert the omen.

Altho' the church of God should be covered with afflictions, and seated among the pots, though she bleed at every vein, through the wounds given her in the house of her friends, yet her Redeemer is strong *the holy One of Israel*. † In him will I trust, and to him commit the cause.

I am, Rev. sir, as heretofore, without the least change of my name,

Your Friend,

The Parishioner:

To Dr. BELLAMY.

June 1770:

† Isai. 41. 14.

POSTSCRIPT.

By another Hand.

THE public (it seems) are ready to think it high time, to be eased of the dispute, began with the dialogue on *The Half-Way-Covenant*, carried on by more dialogues---and the controversy not brought to a point, even by the fourth.

Now, if there be a difference between *entering* into covenant, and *fulfilling* it; (as it seems there is this difference, which God has made by his constitution; and, which, the nature of the thing doth speak:)---Then, let it be consider'd; Whether the not attending to this, be not the foundation of their mistake, who make “a compliance with the covenant of grace, (*meaning thereby, saving grace*) i. e. such gracious exercises, as are infallibly connected with salvation, ” (D. 4th, p. 11. 12.) *the qualification* of entering into God's covenant; which, it seems, must conclude thus—Either, that the covenant they mean, is not the covenant made with Abraham and his seed; or, that this same, has no *visible* saints in it, who are not *real* saints.

But, as to the covenant with Abraham and his seed, it appears, God did by his own gracious act, take *graceless*, as well as *gracious* persons into that covenant, in the visible exhibition, and frame of it. And in after time, called upon this, his visible people, the *men* and their *wives*, with their *little ones*, in solemn assembly, “to enter into his covenant, and into his oath, that he might establish them for a people to himself, and be unto them a God, as he had said;” which, is represented to have had some good effect; in the people's *standing to the covenant*, and in some sense *doing according* thereto--all this solemnity of renewing covenant, &c. was with evident design, to transmit the religion of the God of Abraham, and the honour of its great Author, to future generations.

And

And what now? When the covenant is the same, as says, Acts 2. 39. And the covenanters with God, the same visible people of God; May none be allowed to enter into it, or recognize their engagements to be the Lord's, but, such as have saving grace, or profess they have, whether they have or not? Is not this against the original and everlasting design of the covenant, and subversive of the constitution of heaven in the case? What! may none come into *the bond of the covenant*, but such as have actually fulfilled it, when yet, coming into the bond of the covenant, is the instituted way to this? May none rightfully and really be in the *visible church* of God, but such as belong to the *invisible*? It seems, they may: and yet, the visible covenant, according to which, they are incorporated, be no more an *ungracious covenant*, than the word of God, is an *ungracious word*.

It is in this view, a gracious covenant, as it exhibits, and offers grace to sinners, and has, contained in it, the means of grace, and salvation, as well as the promise of eternal life to believers. For, God has made a grant of the means of grace to his visible church, &c. And may they not use them in any sense? but, (being unregenerate) had they better do nothing, than use them? And is the bare want of grace (though earnestly sought) constructively, the rejection of the covenant, that ranks them with heathen, or worse? Are the unregenerate, (baptised and some kind of believers) no more in covenant than the devil? Why then, what were many that God took into covenant with him, and those whom our Saviour treats, as belonging to the kingdom of God? Are these but upon a par with the devil; and *as far off from God*? Tho' God speaks of them, as *a people near unto him*; which has a meaning in it quite incompatible with the *state of spirits in prison*.



And